

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

But the decision to withdraw from Iraq created a crisis of confidence, a capability crisis. When there is a vacuum in the Middle East, people go back to their corners—and that is exactly what has happened in Iraq with the lack of an American presence.

Here is what is so heartbreaking. Some 10,000 or 15,000 U.S. soldiers strategically placed would have held this together and politics would have taken over. But it is hard to do political agreements when you are subject to being killed by people on the other side. You need a certain level of security to advance society.

That security has completely been lost in Iraq, and Syria is a contagion for the entire region.

Our indecision and indecisive action in Syria—it was bipartisan, by the way. Plenty of Republicans said: Stay out of Syria; it is none of our concern. What Senator MCCAIN and I have been worried about in Syria for about 3 or 4 years is that Iran and Russia were behind Assad. It is not in our interest for Iranians to be in Syria because it is very hard to get them to abandon their nuclear program if they think we are weak in Syria, and it is in our national security interest for Syria not to become an Islamic state.

About 3 years ago there were 500 foreign fighters. Today there are 26,000. So to those Republicans and Democrats who said stay out of Syria, don't use airstrikes or air power, I am sad to say that I think you were wrong. I think Syria has become an absolute breeding ground for radical Islamists, and the next attack against our country could very well originate from the people who are fighting in Syria today. And I have never been more worried about another 9/11 than I am right now.

So, Mr. President, if you are willing to adjust your policies, we will sit down with you. If you are willing to sit down with your generals and get some good, sound military advice, we will stand with you because what happens in Iraq and Syria does matter. I don't think we need boots on the ground. I don't think that is an option for consideration. But if our military leaders say that we need to stop ISIS because it is in our national security interests through the use of our air power, count me in if that is what our generals say.

I will stand with you, Mr. President, if you correct your policies. If you continue to be delusional about the world, I will be your worst critic.

With that, I yield back.

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**CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS**

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair thanks the distinguished Senator from South Carolina for yielding the floor.

Morning business is closed.

**NOMINATION OF CRYSTAL NIX-HINES FOR THE RANK OF AMBASSADOR DURING HER TENURE OF SERVICE AS THE UNITED STATES PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC, AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION**

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nomination as follows:

Nomination of Crystal Nix-Hines, of California, for the rank of Ambassador during her tenure of service as the United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 30 minutes of debate on the nomination equally divided in the usual form.

Who yields time?

No one having yielded time, the time will be charged equally to both sides.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I rise to oppose the nomination of Crystal Nix-Hines to be the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, otherwise called UNESCO. I wanted to speak on this nomination and once again express my firm opposition to the administration's stated intention to circumvent U.S. law—the law that was passed by this body regarding funding of UNESCO—and an intention repeated by Ms. Nix-Hines at her hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last year.

I have nothing personal against this individual. I have not met her. I am sure she is a woman of good character and qualified for the job. But nevertheless I think it is important that we understand before we take this vote what we are doing here and why we shouldn't be doing it and that Ms. Nix-Hines's previous statement is relevant to her confirmation to this organization.

If confirmed, this nomination will result in the administration sending a representative to an organization which we do not fund and in which we have no vote. That is right. We will be sending a confirmed U.S. Ambassador to an organization which we do not support and in which we have no vote. That contradiction can only mean the administration is still attempting to change those circumstances by seeking waiver authority, and that is the reason why I am speaking today and why I am opposing this nomination.

Let me provide some context. In late 2011 UNESCO offered membership to the Palestinian Authority. This was a consequence of a Palestinian campaign

to achieve recognition as a state by appealing unilaterally and directly to the United Nations and its agencies. UNESCO's decision to admit Palestine as a full member has further dimmed prospects for negotiated peace in the Middle East.

My fear is that this step—which the Palestinians regard as a success—will encourage them to press for membership in other U.N. bodies as well, achieving a legitimacy through the U.N. that they don't deserve as a state and that they need to understand presents major obstacles to ever achieving some type of reconciliation between the Israelis and the Palestinians. This will harm Israel, it will harm the Palestinians' own interests, harm the U.N. agencies involved, and damage our own national interests.

To prevent this sort of unilateral maneuver by the Palestinians, U.S. law—it is the law—has long prohibited funding to any U.N. agency that admits Palestine as a member. The purpose of this termination and the will of Congress regarding it was to discourage such reckless behavior by the U.N. and by the Palestinians.

Let me repeat that. The harm that is done through this has caused us—brought us to a point where we passed a law signed by the President that said we will not support any agency that acknowledges and admits Palestine as a recognized state. That is our policy. So funding UNESCO or even providing a waiver for that would be a clear violation of U.S. law.

We have seen the administration try to work around Congress in a number of ways, neglecting to check the law in terms of what they are required to do. We are currently in an embroiled situation here with this detainee release from Guantanamo of five of the top leaders of the Taliban—a blatant violation of the law that exists on the books in terms of consultation with Congress before this is done. Nevertheless, that is not what I am here for today. That is another issue.

Our laws require the United States to cut off budget support to UNESCO, and we will do the same to other agencies that also circumvent the correct path to negotiated settlement. I think that is good policy.

When some administration officials spoke publicly soon after the UNESCO vote about finding a "work-around" or seeking a waiver, I introduced legislation not to tolerate such alternatives and said I would not support the waiver. I repeated those efforts in subsequent State and Foreign Operations appropriations bills when the administration included appropriations for UNESCO in its budget request and Secretary Kerry said in his testimony that they would be "seeking to change or repeal the law."

In his comments on the subject, Secretary Kerry spoke about the value he saw in this U.N. agency but said nothing about the value of discouraging Palestinian efforts to circumvent negotiations and change its status at the